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VOL. 92 NO. 7 OCTOBER 2007

IE GULL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY



CALIFORNIA
ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
FOUNDED 1917

OCT - 4 2007

LIBRARY

Join the Annual Restore-A-Thon



American Bittern seen earlier this year at Lake Merced.

Golden Gate Audubon's 90 Years at Lake Merced

Lake Merced has been a birding resource for Golden Gate Audubon since the organization's beginning in 1917, when it was called the Audubon Association of the Pacific. Over the past nine decades, we have sponsored hundreds of field trips there and voiced our concern for the protection of the lake's habitat and wildlife.

A review of field trip reports in *The Gull* over our first 25 years reveals Lake Merced as the most productive birding site of all those visited. Times changed, and for a period during the 1960s and early 1970s, Golden Gate Audubon didn't sponsor any trips to the lake. By the mid-1970s, with a core of new birders in San Francisco, Lake Merced was rediscovered and now ranks again as a premier birding destination for both individuals and organized groups.

Lake Merced, a natural lake in the southwest corner of San Francisco, is a surface manifestation of the Westside Aquifer, which extends from about Golden Gate Park south and east to an area north of the San Francisco International Airport. Originally fed by creeks that drained the uplands of Mt. Davidson southward and westward to the Vista Grande Watershed (Daly City), the lake is now restricted to less than 10 percent of the original flow. All of the area's creeks have been buried in pipes, and most, if not all, are diverted into the sewage system. San Francisco State University is

LAKE MERCED continued on page 10

Now in its fifth year, Golden Gate Audubon's Restore-A-Thon is dedicated to enhancing native habitat for the California Quail and other species at the Presidio and Harding Park in San Francisco. This year's event will be held on Saturday, November 10, from 9 a.m. to noon, when volunteers will remove invasives and plant native vegetation.

Enthusiastic volunteers provide their time to this yearly effort, but the project also needs funds to help guarantee its success. If you cannot participate by working in the field, you can assist us by making a contribution. When you sponsor a volunteer or the Golden Gate Audubon volunteer team for three hours at \$15 per hour, you will be supporting the campaign with a \$45 contribution. If you are able to come on November 10, you can sponsor yourself and also ask friends and family to fund your three hours of work. All contributions are tax-deductible.

Although Golden Gate Audubon restores native habitat through our monthly workdays at the Presidio and Harding Park, the annual Restore-A-Thon provides much-needed funds for the program. If you can join us next month, not only will you be helping the quail and other native birds, but you'll meet other volunteers and get an enjoyable introduction to two places where Golden Gate Audubon regularly works.

To sign up, fill out and mail the form on page 11 or go to www.goldengateaudubon.org.



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ROSTER

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The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 25, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Society Supporting Membership is \$25 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. The board of directors meets the last Monday of every month (except August and December) at 7:30 p.m. in the chapter office in Berkeley.

The *Gull* is published nine times per year by the Golden Gate Audubon Society. The deadline for submissions is five weeks prior to the month of publication. Special third-class postage paid in Oakland, CA. Send address changes to office promptly. The post office does not forward *The Gull*.

The Gull – ISSN 0164-971X

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Design and layout e.g. communications

Individuals Are Key to Conserving Bay Wildlife and Wild Places



One of the ironies of being executive director of Golden Gate Audubon is that I so rarely have the chance to go birding. Though my mind is constantly focused on birds, it is often a challenge to step out from behind the piles of paper and connect with the rich avian diversity of the San Francisco Bay Area.

Over the past few months, however, I have had the luxury of visiting some of Golden Gate Audubon's program sites. I've seen Western Snowy Plovers (a federally threatened species) at San Francisco's Ocean Beach; Golden Eagles, Burrowing Owls, and American Kestrels at Altamont Pass; and a flock of White Pelicans along the Richmond shoreline. Other outings have yielded Black-necked Stilts at Martin Luther King, Jr., Regional Shoreline; Whimbrels and Semipalmated Plovers at Fort Funston; and Brandt's Cormorants and endangered Brown Pelicans galore along San Francisco's Lands End trail.

This list may not impress the seasoned birder, but I am struck by how easy it is to see a diversity of birds—including rare and endangered species—in this urbanized area. We are lucky to have wildlife and natural areas at such close reach. As Golden Gate Audubon celebrates its 90th anniversary, I am again reminded that many of our most important habitats and native wildlife are thriving because Golden Gate Audubon members cared enough to protect them.

On the opposite page, you'll read about some of today's most important conservation heroes: Amelia Wilson and the campaign to protect Gateway Valley's 1,400 acres of pristine oak woodlands; Whitney Dotson and the effort to preserve one of the most significant stretches of natural shoreline in the Central Bay; Lisa Wayne and the program to restore natural areas in San Francisco's parks; and Arlene Rodriguez and her leadership in helping connect communities of all backgrounds with Bay Area habitats.

Each has made a significant difference in Bay Area conservation, and together they illustrate the impact of individual leadership and perseverance. They also underscore the critical importance of community, without which these efforts would have been impossible.

Since 1917, Golden Gate Audubon has been a community of people who loved Bay Area birds and were committed to enjoying and protecting wildlife and their habitats. Together, we have secured significant conservation victories and inspired thousands of people to care passionately about and protect local wildlife and wild places.

We continue this proud tradition today, from the beaches of San Francisco to the hills and shoreline of the East Bay. Sometimes we are fighting to save a critically important place because nobody else has stepped up to do it. Sometimes we are opening the eyes of an adult or child to the beauty of the songbirds in their backyard. Both are critical components of our mission and vital steps in our next 90 years of conservation victories. I am proud to be a part of your community.

by Elizabeth Murdock, Executive Director

Last Chance for Tickets to GGA's 90th Anniversary

A limited number of tickets are available for Golden Gate Audubon's 90th anniversary celebration on October 11 at Pier 1 in San Francisco. Space may still be available. To purchase tickets, contact Michael Martin at 510.843.7295 or mmartin@goldengateaudubon.org. For more information, including a complete listing of items in the silent and live auctions, go to www.goldengateaudubon.org.

Golden Gate Audubon Honors Volunteers and Community Leaders

Golden Gate Audubon established the Elsie Roemer Conservation Award in 1979 to recognize volunteers who have shown lasting and consistent dedication to environmental conservation. The award is named after Elsie B. Roemer, who worked tirelessly to protect wetland habitats in Alameda and Oakland. The two new recipients of the award, Whitney Dotson and Amelia Wilson, have similarly committed themselves to saving wildlife habitats in their respective communities.

Coinciding with Golden Gate Audubon's 90th anniversary, we have established a new award, the Golden Gull Community Leadership Award, to single out individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions. The first recipients are Arlene Rodriguez of the San Francisco Foundation and Lisa Wayne of the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department's Natural Areas Program.

We are grateful to all four individuals for the work they have done in the past, as well as their ongoing commitment to conservation, and look forward to the October 11 anniversary celebration in San Francisco, when they will receive their awards.

WHITNEY DOTSON

Elsie Roemer Conservation Award

Having grown up with his family in the Parchester Village community of North Richmond, Whitney Dotson was well aware of the City of Richmond's promise long ago to preserve Breuner Marsh and its uplands as open space for the nearby residents. As decades passed, the city never followed through, and various proposals to develop the land surfaced. A 2001 plan to fill the wetland motivated Dotson to found the North Richmond Shoreline Open Space Alliance, a grassroots group of residents supported by environmental groups such as Golden Gate Audubon.

The 2001 project never materialized, but in 2005 a large development with housing, retail, and a transit station was proposed for the site. Spearheading the effort to save

Breuner Marsh, Whitney and the alliance enlisted the help of the local community and environmental groups. Their efforts paid off when the East Bay Regional Park District decided to acquire Breuner Marsh in 2006.



Due to Whitney's commitment and dedication, 220 acres of wetlands and uplands, including Rheem Creek, will be set aside as open space for residents and habitat for shorebirds, waterfowl, and other wildlife. Over the years, Whitney has personally introduced many community members to the marsh, and as chair of the alliance, he continues to advocate for the protection of the North Richmond shoreline. As part of a new project, the North Richmond Shoreline Academy, Richmond residents and birders are surveying the shoreline's bird life. On census days, Whitney is in the field, binoculars in hand.

ARLENE RODRIGUEZ

Golden Gull Community Leadership Award

As the Environment Program Officer at the San Francisco Foundation, Arlene has been a tireless advocate for promoting effective conservation in the Bay Area. Thanks to her keen understanding of local conservation priorities, she has helped direct funds to some of the most critical conservation projects, including Golden Gate Audubon's. In recent years, San Francisco Foundation grants have supported bird censuses at the Martin Luther King, Jr., Regional Shoreline in Oakland and the Eastshore State Park, an evaluation of the U.S. Navy's remediation

plans for the Alameda Wildlife Refuge, and the activities of the Eco-Oakland Program, which benefit East Oakland students and their families.

A strong leader in the environmental justice movement, Arlene has urged environmental groups to reach out to diverse communities and systemically improve the growing environmental health disparities in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. She has played a leading role in the Bay Area "Learning Community," a consortium of local environmental educators who meet regularly to determine how environmental education can be more effective and accessible to the diverse Bay Area population. Her work has led to a new standard for evaluating how effectively environmental education programs are in reaching their participants.



Arlene's work has brought thousands of new people into the conservation community and has resulted in a lasting benefit to local wildlife and their habitats.

LISA WAYNE

Golden Gull Community Leadership Award

A decade ago, the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department established the Natural Areas Program (NAP) to protect and restore native habitats and support biodiversity in the city's parks. Under Director Lisa Wayne's astute leadership, the Natural Areas Program is now active in 31 parks, from the oak woodlands in Golden Gate Park to McLaren Park near San Bruno Mountain. The 830 acres covered by NAP contain an irreplaceable variety of rich landscapes, such as grasslands, dunes, and

GGA HONORS continued on page 8



CONSERVATION CORNER

JOIN A GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Interested in becoming an advocate on behalf of Bay Area birds and wildlife? Join one of our conservation committees! Golden Gate Audubon has three teams of conservation advocates: the San Francisco Conservation Committee, the East Bay Conservation Committee, and the Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge.

Committee projects include encouraging the City of San Francisco to increase funding for the Natural Areas Program, fighting development threats to the Martin Luther King, Jr., Regional Shoreline, and advocating for the creation of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge. If you're interested in getting involved, please contact Eli Saddler, Golden Gate Audubon's conservation director, at esaddler@goldengateaudubon.org or 510.843.6551.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AND EVENTS

Saturday, October 6, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Ocean Fest: Discover Your Marine Sanctuaries. Celebrate our magnificent ocean along the water's edge. Enjoy sustainable seafood, local beers and wines, live music, kids' activities, raffle prizes, and more. Free admission. For more information, go to www.farallones.org. Event is held at West Crissy Field, San Francisco.

Saturday, October 13, 9 a.m. – noon
Save the Quail habitat restoration work-

day at the Presidio. Meet at the Natural Resources Field Office, 1539 Pershing Dr., San Francisco.

Sundays, October 14 and November 11, 9 a.m. – noon

Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge workday. Help us prepare habitat for California Least Terns, which breed at the refuge. Meet at main refuge gate at northwest corner of former Alameda Naval Air Station, Alameda.

Saturday, October 27, 9 a.m. – noon

Save the Quail habitat restoration workday at Harding Park. Meet at parking lot at corner of Sunset Blvd. and Lake Merced Blvd.

Saturday, November 3, 1 – 4 p.m.

Migratory bird habitat restoration and planting at East Wash, Lands End. Meet at Lands End parking lot at intersection of Pt. Lobos Ave. and Merrie Way, just above Sutro Baths and the Cliff House, San Francisco. Please RSVP for workday to both Michael Martin (mmartin@goldengateaudubon.org or 510.843.7295) and Caroline Christman (cchristman@parks-conservancy.org).

Saturday, November 10, 9 a.m. – noon

Join us for the annual California Quail Restore-A-Thon! To sign up for the event, held at both the Presidio and Harding Park, please contact Michael Martin or the

Golden Gate Audubon office at ggas@goldengateaudubon.org or 510.843.2222. For more details, see page 1 article and signup form on page 11.

For more information, or for directions to any of the activity sites, please contact Michael Martin at 510.843.7295 or mmartin@goldengateaudubon.org.

HELP PLAN THE FUTURE OF WARM WATER COVE PARK

Warm Water Cove, located on San Francisco's central bayside waterfront, is surrounded by industrial development but hosts a number of bird species, especially from fall through spring. The cove is one of the areas covered on the annual Christmas Bird Count sponsored by Golden Gate Audubon.

The park is one of the few open spaces along the central waterfront, an area that is the focus of a San Francisco Planning Department proposal to rezone historic industrial land for increased residential density. The Neighborhood Parks Council, SPUR (San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association), and the Port of San Francisco are asking the community to comment on future uses for the park. If you are familiar with Warm Water Cove Park and can comment on its value as open space and potential wildlife habitat, please go to www.sfnpc.org, download a survey, and follow the instructions for submitting it.

Pier 94 Workday

As part of our ongoing efforts to restore wetlands along San Francisco's southern waterfront, we'll hold a cleanup and planting at Pier 94 on Saturday, November 17, from 9 a.m. to noon. Come join us! Over the past two years, thanks to Golden Gate Audubon volunteers, Pier 94 has been transformed from an abandoned industrial site to a functioning wetlands that hosts many plants and birds, and a small population of other wildlife. The site also has the world's largest population of California Sea-blite, a federally endangered wetlands plant.

Help us continue our successes! Light refreshments will be provided to all who attend. Please contact Michael Martin to sign up and for directions to the worksite.



Collecting California Sea-blite seeds at the southern San Francisco waterfront.
Peter Baye



SPEAKER SERIES

Talks in the Speaker Series begin at 7:30 p.m. At 7 p.m., delicious snacks are served by hospitality coordinator Susanne Shields. Speaker Series coordinator is Sarah Reed.

Endangered Species Big Year at the Golden Gate National Parks

Brent Plater

Thursday, October 18

Berkeley

The Golden Gate National Parks contain more endangered species than any other unit of the National Park System in the continental North America. This array of imperiled biodiversity is a source of wonder and celebration, but according to Plater, it is also cause for reflection, as the imperiled status indicates something is wrong with our relationship to the park.

In 2008 Golden Gate Audubon will work in support of Plater's exciting campaign to reconnect people with the superlative resources and values of the park: the Endangered Species Big Year. Like traditional listing competitions, the Big Year provides opportunities to see the 33 endangered species in the park. But this Big Year also empowers individuals to take 33 species recovery actions, reconnecting people with the preservationist values of this urban national park experiment. Join Brent Plater and hear about the upcoming Golden Gate National Parks Big Year.

Brent, an avid birder and long-time supporter of Golden Gate Audubon, is a visiting assistant professor and staff attorney at Golden Gate University Law School's Environmental Law and Justice Clinic, a lecturer in law at San Francisco State University, and the director of the 2008 Golden Gate National Parks Endangered Species Big Year.

Berkeley: Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda (between Solano and Marin).

Directions: www.northbrae.org/directions.htm



Snowy Plover at Crissy Field.
Lee Karney

Sublime Birding in Ecuador's West-Andean Cloud Forests

Loring Dales

Tuesday, October 23

San Francisco

Visit the tropical montane cloud forests of South America with Loring Dales, who will explain where these forests are found, how they function ecologically, and what their conservation status is in South America. Focusing on the birds of Ecuador's West-Andean slope cloud forests, Loring will show individual species and describe where birders can find and view them. If you are thinking of taking a trip to South America, you will want to begin planning your adventure by hearing about these repositories of spectacular biodiversity from an experienced birder's perspective.

Loring Dales, MD, a Golden Gate Audubon member, has been a birder for five decades and is a natural history enthusiast and committed conservationist. He has birded in tropical America multiple times and is particularly intrigued by cloud forests and the birds that inhabit them.

San Francisco: County Fair Building, San Francisco Botanical Garden, Golden Gate Park, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way. Directions: www.sfbotanicalgarden.org/visiting/page2.html

Birds and Business: Conservation Secrets Everyone Should Know

On Wednesday, November 7, Golden Gate Audubon and Audubon California will cosponsor a presentation by Dr. Jeff Wells, a leading bird conservationist and author of the upcoming *Birder's Conservation Handbook: North America's 100 Birds of Conservation Concern*. The talk will begin at 8 p.m. at Audubon California, 4225 Hollis Street, Emeryville.

Recent surveys place the number of U.S. citizens who watch birds at more than 60 million and indicate that interest in birding is growing faster than any other outdoor pursuit.

Dr. Wells will talk about the links among the state of birds, the growing popularity of birding, and the impact of birders and birding on communities, economics, policy, and conservation in North America. In a wide-ranging presentation covering everything from global warming to lingerie, Kleenex, and donut holes to the Argentinean economy, he will describe the best-kept secrets of bird conservation, including the birding-business connection. He'll also share some critical conservation opportunities, including protection of the Boreal: North America's "Great Bird Nursery."

Where in the World Have You Birded?

A map of the world at the Golden Gate Audubon office is marked with pins to show where our members have birded. Many countries on the map are not singled out. Have you birded in Africa, Asia, or South America? Let us know by contacting Marilyn Nasatir, mnasatir@berkeley.edu.



FIELD TRIPS

PAM BELCHAMBER, COORDINATOR

\$ Entrance fee
Biking trip

For questions about individual field trips, contact the leaders. If you cannot reach a leader, contact Pam Belchamber at 510.549.2839. Field trips are also listed on the Golden Gate Audubon website at www.goldengateaudubon.org.

Jewel Lake in Tilden Regional Park

Berkeley

Friday, October 5, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

Phil Rogers, 510.848.9156, philajane6@yahoo.com

Meet at parking lot at north end of Central Park Dr. for a mile-long stroll through this lush riparian area. We will look for lingering breeders, early-arriving winter birds, and migrants. Mark your calendar for Jewel Lake walk on the first Friday of November.

San Francisco Botanical Garden

Saturday, October 6, 10 a.m. – noon

Angie Geiger and Nancy DeStefanis, SF Nature Education, www.sfnature.org; Darin Dawson, SF Botanical Garden Docent, 415.387.9160

Meet at front gate of garden in Golden Gate Park, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. Families welcome. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Cosponsored by Botanical Garden, San Francisco Nature Education, and GGA.

San Francisco Botanical Garden

Sunday, October 7, 8 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Alan Ridley, allanrid@pacbell.net; Helen McKenna, 415.566.3241; Ginny Marshall, 650.349.3780

Meet at front gate of garden in Golden Gate Park, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. The garden's micro-habitats attract an array of resident, migrant, and vagrant birds. This monthly trip is oriented toward helping beginning birders develop their skills in spotting and identifying birds.

Coyote Hills Regional Park

Fremont

Saturday, October 13, 9 a.m. – noon

Anne Hoff, anne221Ob@sbcglobal.net

Meet at visitor center. With its varied

habitats, Coyote Hills is a good spot for surprises. We will see raptors, wintering ducks, basic-plumaged songbirds, and maybe some juveniles to puzzle us. Check the weather forecast and dress accordingly. Bring a scope if you have one. We'll linger after the trip for lunch at park's picnic tables. Heavy rain cancels. Parking fee is \$5; self-register in envelopes.

From I-880, take Dumbarton Bridge exit (west). Get off at Paseo Parkwy. Turn right at stop sign and continue north for 1 mile, then turn left where a small brown sign points to Coyote Hills Regional Park. Self-serve parking permit requires \$5. \$

Hayward Area Shoreline

San Leandro

Sunday, October 14, 8:30 a.m. – noon

Rusty Scalf, 510.666.9936

We'll meet at the East Bay Regional Park parking lot at end of Grant Ave. and then search the mudflats for shorebirds.

Take I-880 south to Washington Ave. exit in San Leandro. Exit 880 to 238, then take Washington Ave. off-ramp. At base of off-ramp turn left on Beatrice then right onto Washington Ave. Drive south on Washington to Grant Ave. Turn right on Grant and go to parking lot at end.

Corona Heights

San Francisco

Friday, October 19, 8 – 10 a.m.

Charles Hibbard; Lewis Ellingham; Margaret Goodale 415.554.9600 ext. 16, mgoodale@randallmuseum.org

Meet in front of Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, at end of Museum Way off Roosevelt. We'll enjoy views of the



Bob Lewis

Willet eating a clam, at the Hayward Regional Shoreline.

city and bay as we circle Corona Heights, checking east canyon woodland and north forest for residents and migrants, as well as monitoring hilltop scrub and south cliff.

12th Annual Pt. Reyes National Seashore Birding Blitz

Marin County

Saturday, October 20, 8 a.m.

Leon Abrams, 510.843.4107, leonabrams@earthlink.net; Cathy Purchis, catpur@value.net

Meet at Five Brooks Trailhead parking lot, 3.5 miles south of Olema on Hwy. 1. This fast-paced multihabitat trip covers Five Brooks pond area, Limantour Spit, Drakes Beach, Chimney Rock, and Point Reyes, ending at Bear Valley.

Trip can produce 100 species or more. You never know what will appear at Pt. Reyes. Previously we've seen a late Bullock's Oriole, all three species of loon,

Tips for Going on a Field Trip

Birders of all levels are welcome on Golden Gate Audubon field trips. Trips may require walking on trails or uneven terrain, or birding in variable weather for several hours or more. For your comfort and safety, wear appropriate clothing and walking shoes. If you need information about a trip destination that is unfamiliar to you, contact the leader or field trips coordinator. Carpooling is recommended, especially for trips where participants will be caravaning to multiple locations.

all three species of cormorants, White-fronted Goose, Wood Duck, Virginia Rail, Sora, Wandering Tattler, Surfbird, Common Snipe, seven gull species, Varied Thrush, Townsend's Warbler, Tricolored Blackbird, and Pine Siskin. We've also seen a frolicking Humpback Whale at Limantour as well as Harbor Seals and Mule Deer.

Trip, cosponsored by Ohlone Audubon Society and National Park Service, is limited to 15 participants. Sign up by contacting leaders. Bring food and water, and wear layered clothing.

Hidden Lake Park and Open Space

Martinez

Sunday, October 21, 8 a.m. – noon

Denise Wight, 925.377.0951 or
510.547.6822, blkittiwake@yahoo.com

Meet in the parking lot near entrance to Hidden Lake Park, a hidden gem of a birding spot in the center of Contra Costa suburbia. Sixteen-acre Hidden Lakes comprises three ponds, a small creek, blue oak woodland, and grassland, as well as a variety of manmade habitats. Besides common resident and winter species, we will keep an eye out for unusual species. Past rarities seen here have included Tropical Kingbird, Clay-colored Sparrow, and the first mainland Northern California record of Field Sparrow. Heavy rain cancels.

Take I-80 east, then Hwy. 4 east to Martinez. Exit at Morrelo Ave. Turn right at exit stoplight and proceed on Morrelo about 1 mile to intersection of Chilpancingo and Morrello. Sign and entrance to Hidden Lakes are on left.

Lake Merritt and Lakeside Park

Oakland

Wednesday, October 24,

9:30 a.m. – noon

Hilary Powers, 510.834.1066, hilary@powersedit.com; Ruth Tobey,
510.528.2093, ruthtobey@earthlink.net

Meet at large spherical cage near Nature Center at Perkins and Bellevue. We will bird around there, then go up garden path toward Children's Fairyland or walk down the lake toward Embarcadero, after which we will cover what we missed. This is the quietest month at the lake, but resi-

Mark Your Calendar – Don't Miss the 2007 Christmas Bird Count

Every year in December, Bay Area birders volunteer to count birds, contributing to a national database that tracks the population of wintering species. Golden Gate Audubon sponsors two Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs). The Oakland CBC will be held on Sunday, December 16; the San Francisco CBC takes place on Thursday, December 27. Look for details about both counts in the November Gull. To learn more about the CBC, go to Birding and Wildlife Resources at www.goldengate-audubon.org.

dents such as herons and woodpeckers should be out in force, and the first winter migrants should be arriving.

Take 12, N, or NL bus to Grand and Perkins, and walk into park on Perkins. Best parking is at boathouse lot near spherical cage. Entry (via Bellevue near Children's Fairyland) is free on weekdays.

Albany Mudflats

Eastshore State Park

Thursday, October 25, 7:30 – 9:30 a.m.

Emily Strauss 510.540.8749,
desertpeach@earthlink.net

Bring your scopes to see shorebirds at Albany mudflats from viewing platform. There is a very narrow range of tidal conditions during which viewing for shorebirds is optimal, so arrive early. Leader will bring scope and is willing to share; scopes brought by other birders may be available as well. If a raptor does not scare the shorebirds away, birding can be spectacular. We may also walk around either the mudflat trail or the Albany Bulb.

From I-80, drive to westernmost end of Buchanan St., where parking is usually available. Then walk back

just over .10 mile to viewing platform across from cordgrass marsh and Golden Gate Fields

Napa River Birding Cruise

Vallejo Marina, Vallejo

Sunday, November 4, 9:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

If you've always wanted to see and bird the Napa River, this is your opportunity. The tide will be falling, and the birding should be great. The *Delphinus* will leave from and return to Vallejo Marina. Bring lunch and appropriate clothing. Trip is limited to 30 participants. Cost is \$80 for Golden Gate Audubon Supporting Members, \$90 for nonmembers. Reserve space by contacting Kristen Bunting, GGA office manager, 510.843.2222 or ggas@goldengateaudubon.org. Payment must be received by October 19.

Take Hwy. 80 east toward Sacramento. Cross Carquinez Bridge (\$4 toll), stay in right lane, and exit at Sonoma Blvd. Continue in left lane until Curtola Pkwy. intersection and jog left onto Mare Island Way. Go past Vallejo Ferry Terminal and turn left at stop-light onto Harbor Way. Turn left into first driveway and park. A crew member will meet you at gate for "K" dock.



Black-necked Stilt.

Bob Lewis

scrub, that were once common throughout the northern peninsula.



Leveraging a limited budget and staff, Lisa has engaged thousands of volunteers from community groups as diverse as schools, church groups, and environmental organizations, including Golden Gate Audubon, in NAP projects. Believing strongly in NAP's community-based approach, she has enlisted many city residents in the stewardship of local parks and, in the process, introduced them to the native habitats and wildlife in their own backyards.

At Lake Merced, where Golden Gate Audubon has long been involved, Lisa helped obtain funding for restoration that has received acclaim from the Coastal Conservancy. As a result of NAP's efforts, other areas at the lake support White-Crowned

Sparrows, a species that has disappeared from many neighborhoods. Lisa has been instrumental in supplying native plants and gardeners for Golden Gate Audubon's restoration work at Harding Park.

Lisa's extraordinary ability to involve the community in the stewardship and appreciation of the native habitats in San Francisco parks helps guarantee that wildlife has a place in the urban environment.

AMELIA WILSON

Elsie Roemer Conservation Award

Beginning in the late 1980s, successive developments were proposed for Gateway Valley, a thousand-acre expanse of open space in Contra Costa County. Amelia Wilson was one of the Orinda residents who stepped forward to oppose the leveling of the valley, the destruction of its wetlands and streams, and the fragmentation of its valuable native habitats for a massive housing development and a golf course.

Spearheading the campaign to protect the valley, Amelia and her husband, Pete, founded Save Open Space—Gateway Valley. With passion and persistence, she educated the community, rallied residents within and well beyond Orinda, and gathered support from local environmental groups, Golden Gate Audubon among them. Due to Amelia's hard work, people showed up to speak in meetings and con-

tributed to the ongoing effort to raise funds for legal fees.

Finally, in 2004, negotiations with a new developer led to an agreement to protect Gateway Valley, reduce the footprint of the development, and eliminate the golf course. Eight hundred acres of the valley plus an adjacent 600 acres of mitigation lands—forming a vital link in a continuous 20-mile corridor of East Bay open space—will be under permanent protection and owned by the East Bay Regional Park District and the East Bay Municipal Utility District.



Amelia has shown a deep commitment to protecting wildlands for the benefit of wildlife and local communities. For more than 15 years, she has been a member of the board of directors of the Regional Parks Association and currently serves as president. She and Pete are longtime members of Golden Gate Audubon and are active in the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance and Glen Canyon Institute.

Donations

Thank you for your generous donations to support our many conservation, education, and member activities!

GOLDEN EAGLE (\$1000 AND MORE)

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Bertero, Jay & Lisa Pierrepont (90th Anniversary), Port of San Francisco (90th Anniversary).

PEREGRINE FALCON (\$500 TO \$999)

Brian S. & Kathleen Bean (90th Anniversary), Ron & Susan Briggs (90th Anniversary), Jim Chappell: San Francisco Planning + Urban Research Association (90th Anniversary), Kevin & Susan Consey (90th Anniversary), Robert & Pam Howard, George S. Peyton Jr. & Lani Rumbaoa (90th Anniversary), Phil Price & Juliet Lamont: Creekcats Environmental Fund (90th Anniversary), Allan Ridley & Helen McKenna Ridley (90th Anniversary).

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IN KIND

Donations for 90th Anniversary: A16 Restaurant, Anchor Brewing, Audubon California, Jenifer Balducci, Brian S. & Kathleen Bean, Pam & Jeffrey Belchamber, Blue Waters Kayaking, Eleanor Briccetti, California Academy of Sciences, Jim Carmichael, Chez Panisse Restaurant and Café, Costanoa Coastal Lodge & Camp, Crocodile Bay Resort, Exploratorium, Flexcar, Corinne Louise Greenberg, Mara K. Melandry, Oakland Museum of California, Owl Ridge Wines, Port of San Francisco, Quince Restaurant, Richard Darrough Gardens, Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary, Saintsbury Vineyard, Sarber's Cameras, Rita Sklar, Jacqueline

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Dr. John V. Haralson: Dr. & Mrs. Howard Glaser

IN HONOR OF

Alice R. Thomas & Betty Ann Williams: Patricia Beland

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Jeffrey Black: William & Ellen Kruse

GRANTS

The San Francisco Foundation: Pier 94 wetland restoration

California Environmental Protection Agency: Eco-Oakland Program

The Rose Foundation for Communities & the Environment: Eco-Oakland Program & Richmond Environmental Education

The Sierra Club Foundation: California Least Tern conservation (Alameda Wildlife Refuge)



OBSERVATIONS

BRUCE MAST

AUGUST 1 – 31, 2007

Autumn provides some of the best birding opportunities in California and August marks the transition from summer doldrums to fall frenzy. Time for birders to brush up on shorebird and drab warbler ID skills!

LOONS TO DUCKS

A Red-necked Grebe returned to Limantour's Estero, PRNS, MRN, on the 29th (RS). A Laysan Albatross and Flesh-footed Shearwater provided highlights for the Aug. 14 pelagic trip to Bodega Cyn., SON (DS). Seawatches from the SM coast logged 23 Pink-footed Shearwaters on the 18th and a Black-vented Shearwater on the 25th (RT). Pelagic trips to the Farallon Islands, SF, on the 5th and 20th reported 2 Brown Boobies (*Sula leucogaster*) at Sugarloaf (DS, EP; mob). A White-winged Scoter bobbed offshore at Pescadero Cr., SM, on the 4th (JRy, PM) and a Black Scoter joined the Red-necked Grebe at Limantour's Estero on the 29th (RS).

RAPTORS TO ALCIDS

The season's first Prairie Falcon made an ambitious appearance along Slacker Ridge in the MRN Headlands on Aug. 13 (NW). Shorebird migration kicked into gear with a couple Pacific Golden-Plovers on Aug. 2–7 at Doran Park, Bodega Harbor, SON (LH; LB, DR). A possible American Golden-Plover turned up at Eden's Landing, ALA, on the 11th (SH). A Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) was reported Aug. 20–21 in the company of Marbled Godwits at Pescadero Marsh, SM (ADM; JRI). At least 14 Semipalmated Sandpipers and 12 Baird's Sandpipers were noted at various muddy locations.

Up to 3 Pectoral Sandpipers were observed at New Chicago Marsh, DENWR, SCL, on the 4th and 27th (TG; mob) and another Pectoral stopped over at Pescadero Marsh on the 26th (MB; KP, KR). A remarkable 5 Stilt Sandpipers congregated at New Chicago Marsh on the 31st (FV, BRe; mob). A Buff-breasted Sandpiper lured birders to Heron's Head, SF, Aug. 24–29 (AH and



Bob Lewis

Baird's Sandpiper

DM; mob), and another Buff-breasted was spotted Aug. 25–26 at Abbott's Lagoon, PRNS, MRN (KK; JH). The season's first Ruff touched down on the 29th at Limantour's Estero, PRNS, MRN (RS).

The Elegant Tern flocks off the coast attracted at least 5 Pomarine, 17 Parasitic, and 3 Long-tailed Jaegers. An immature Franklin's Gull lingered at Sunnyvale WPCP, SCL, through the 25th (mob). Common Terns were noted on the 2nd at Crissy Lagoon, SF (HC); on the 14th on a pelagic trip to Bodega Cyn., SON (DS); and on the 27th at Heron's Head, SF (AH). A couple Black Terns scoured the waters of Salt Pond A16, SCL, through the 25th (MD; mob). A hold-over from the alcid irruption earlier this summer, a Thick-billed Murre (*Uria lomvia*), remained at the PRNS Lighthouse, MRN, on the 26th (RS).

DOVES TO THRASHERS

The bird fountain at the Wildlife Gallery in Bolinas, MRN, attracted a Calliope Hummingbird on Aug. 23–27 and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) on Aug. 27–28 (KII). Elsewhere, a Black-chinned Hummingbird visited a backyard in Antioch, CC, on the 22nd (PS, NS) and a Morgan Hill, SCL, feeder hosted 5 hummer species, including Black-chinned and Costa's (SR).

A Least Flycatcher was ID'd atop Mt. Davidson, SF, on the 28th (BF). The next day an Eastern Kingbird made a royal appearance at Hall (Historic D) Ranch, PRNS, MRN (RS). A Red-eyed Vireo visited Duarte's Tavern in Pescadero, SM, on the 11th (RT). Breathalyzer results were not reported. On the 3rd, a Purple Martin paused briefly to bathe on the wing at the CCFS waterbird pond, SCL (MM). On the 23rd, a Bank Swallow transited through at Frank's Dump, Hayward Shoreline, ALA (BRI).

WOOD WARBLERS TO FINCHES

Warbler migration gained momentum with reports of 2 Tennessee and a Prairie Warbler; 3 American Redstarts; a backyard Prothonotary Warbler; an Ovenbird; and 2 Northern Waterthrush. Brewer's Sparrows were noted on the 22nd at Corte Madera Marsh, MRN (NW) and on the 24th at Gazos Cr., SM (RT). An interior subspecies Sage Sparrow turned up at Wildcat Cyn. RP, CC, on the 20th (BF). Finally, a male Indigo Bunting rewarded a visit to Burleigh Murray SP, SM, on the 3rd (BRO).

Semicolons separate original observer(s) from subsequent observer(s). Abbreviation "mob" = many observers; "oob" = other observers. Information is compiled from BirdBox transcripts and regional listservs, the author apologizes for any errors or omissions. Special thanks to Brent Plater and Janet Collins for assistance in compiling data.

Abbreviations for Observers: ADM, Al DeMartin; AH, Alan Hopkins; BF, Brian Fitch; BRe, Bob Reiling; BRi, Bob Richmond; BRO, Bill Rowe; DM, Dominik Mosur; DR, Don Reinberg; DS, Debra Shearwater; EP, Eric Preston; FV, Frank Vanslager; HC, Hugh Cotter; JH, Justin Heights; JRi, Jean Richmond; JRy, Jennifer Rycenga; KH, Keith Hansen; KK, Keith Kwan; KP, Kathy Parker; KR, Kathy Robertson; LB, Len Blumin; LH, Lisa Hug; MB, Michelle Brodie; MD, Matthew Dodder; MM, Michael Mammoser; NS, Nancy Schorr; NW, Nick Whelan; PM, Peggy Macres; PS, Paul Schorr; RS, Rich Stallcup; RT, Ron Thorn; SH, Steve Huckabone; SR, Steve Rottenborn; TG, Tom Grey

Abbreviations for Counties and Others: ALA, Alameda; CC, Contra Costa; CCFS, Coyote Creek Field Station, Cr., Creek, Cyn., Canyon; DENWR, Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge; EEC, Environmental Education Center, L., Lake, MRN, Marin; Mt., Mount; N., North, NAP, Napa; NWR, National Wildlife Refuge; OSP, Open Space Preserve; PRNS, Pt Reyes National Seashore; Pt., Point, Rd., Road; Res., Reservoir; RP, Regional Park; RS, Regional Shoreline; S., South; SB, State Beach, SCL, Santa Clara, SF, San Francisco; SFBBBO, SF Bay Bird Observatory; SM, San Mateo; SOL, Solano; SON, Sonoma; SP, State Park, SR, State Reserve; WPCP, Water Pollution Control Plant

considering a plan to establish a new creek through the north end of campus. The lake's original outlet followed a course somewhat parallel to Sloat Boulevard. It was last open during the late 19th century. Today, Lake Merced stands as the largest single freshwater wetland between Point Reyes and Pescadero. If you could walk around the entire lake, you would cover just over four and a half miles.

During the 90 years for which we have records, the lake has changed considerably.



Bob Lewis

Juvenile Black-crowned Night-Herons. The species is among several wading birds seen regularly at Lake Merced.

In the 1920s it was still a relatively native area, with the exception of the groves of eucalyptus planted as part of a citywide effort to reclaim sand dunes. At that time, children and other city residents took pride in reclaiming the dunes with great eucalyptus groves that covered many of the city's hills and extended in a corridor from Mt. Davidson and Westwood Park to Lake Merced and southward. Small farms and the infrastructure of the Spring Valley Water Company, owner of the lake and the city's first large water company, impacted the uplands, but the marsh and lake continued to provide critical habitat for wildlife.

HARD TIMES AT LAKE MERCED

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the construction of Skyline Boulevard, Lake Merced Boulevard, and a project by the lake's new owners, the San Francisco

Water Department, to raise the water level by more than 10 feet caused major environmental disruptions. The uplands were stripped of trees and other vegetation, and the lake was partly drained and used as a dump for sand from other sites. At around the same time, virtually all marsh vegetation was removed. This was certainly not a period when conservation entered the minds of San Francisco's political leaders. Repeated appeals from the Audubon Society of the Pacific that North Lake Merced be set aside as a bird sanctuary received no encouraging response from the city.

Then, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, public works projects cut off an arm of the lake that extended into the north edge of the San Francisco State University campus and built a sewer line across the south end of the lake beneath what we now call the concrete bridge.

Nature is dynamic, and the lake and marsh began to heal. Water levels were higher than ever, and the marsh restored itself and, in the process, migrated upland to the new shoreline. Fishing and boating captured the public interest, and during the period of the 1950s through the 1970s, Lake Merced was probably the best trout fishing lake in any urban community in North America. Of course, the trout couldn't breed in a lake whose watershed had been destroyed, but stocked fish served the public need. Neglect of infrastructure and the water resource ended the era of great fishing. Boating took its place and continues to dominate the lake's recreational use.

Toward the end of the 1970s and into the 1990s, the Bay Area suffered a series of droughts that reduced Lake Merced to levels not seen in decades. At the same time, water uses like parks, golf courses, and cemeteries increasingly tapped the West Side Aquifer and contributed to the lake's shrinking water level. The problem may have begun long before, but when water levels dipped in the past, city workers just turned on a tap and poured water from the pumping plant into the lake. But with increasing regulations and additional demands on the water from the city's source at Hetch Hetchy in the Sierra Nevada, routinely supplementing Lake Merced was



Dan Murphy

View of North Lake Merced, showing water level in 2005.

no longer practical or environmentally desirable. As the lake's level dropped precipitously, marshlands were left stranded and died.

For several years birders enjoyed the benefits of new mudflats that attracted unusual shorebirds including Solitary Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, and Pectoral Sandpiper. As wonderful as seeing these birds was, their appearance masked the environmental catastrophe that was destroying the lake's marshlands and bringing fatal, eutrophic conditions to the aquatic wildlife that depended on the lake.

SIGNS OF RECOVERY

Most recently, Lake Merced is on the rise. Pumping of the aquifer has been significantly reduced, and treated water has become available for many of the green spaces that once depended on freshwater from the aquifer. The water level is rising and probably will continue to do so for the next few years. The San Francisco Public Utility Commission is taking a more active role in the management of the lake, and so far that seems to be a change for the better.

As the lake rises to levels that can better support an urban fishing program, we are seeing changes in the marshes. Willows that invaded open lake bottoms are dying and forming snag havens for birds such as Double-crested Cormorants, Green Herons, and a host of migrating flycatchers, vireos, and warblers. Bulrush is migrating back to

its former place on the old shoreline. Newly flooded areas are more open and offer additional habitat diversity for nesting birds, particularly American Coots, Pied-billed Grebes, Clark's Grebes, and Green Herons. The nearly dammed area of South Lake, to the south of the concrete bridge, now forms an exciting mix of shallow open water and intricate marshland.

Lake Merced is adapting again. Part of the most recent adaptation is the habitat's support of new nesting species. During the past year, 11 Great Blue Heron nests and 319 Double-crested Cormorant nests were counted. Neither species nested at the lake until 1997. The mix of nesting birds has never been greater.

GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON'S FOCUS: HABITAT PROTECTION

Golden Gate Audubon has been a constant advocate for the lake over its 90-year history. In recent years we have spoken out in favor of stabilizing the lake's water level and then adding to it. We took the position

that water added during the nesting season should be limited to protect nesting birds, and that absolute maximum increases should be adhered to so the marsh had time to adjust. This successful policy has led to the present recovery.

We hope that in the future the sewer line is removed from the South Lake, but a footbridge is retained so visitors can enjoy the half-mile walk. Maintaining a footbridge will also help reduce potential boating impacts on the unique habitat. Golden Gate Audubon has long advocated for wildlife refuge status on parts of the lake. Giving refuge status to the entire North Lake, as our predecessors preferred, is unrealistic, but such status is merited for the shoreline that is not part of the recreation infrastructure.

Golden Gate Audubon's goal is to assure that human impacts are minimized on the steep sand bluffs that so often slip into the lake, causing massive erosion. Our position is one that works toward balancing recreational use with maximum habitat protection. Along with other grass-

roots organizations, we have taken a leading role on the Lake Merced Task Force as we continue to work for a bright future for Lake Merced.

by Dan Murphy,
San Francisco Conservation Committee

Dan Murphy has been involved in many Golden Gate Audubon programs, especially conservation, since he became a member in 1970. He has served on the board of directors, on several committees, including the San Francisco Conservation Committee for over 30 years, and on the Lake Merced Task Force since it began more than a decade ago. Dan began leading field trips for Golden Gate Audubon in the early 1970s—his first was to Lake Merced.



Clark's Grebe and young at Lake Merced.

Norveen Weeden/www.naturetrip.com

Save the Quail Restore-A-Thon

Saturday, November 10, 2007 • 9 a.m. to Noon

- I would like to join a work party. at the Presidio. at Harding Park.
- I will sponsor myself at \$ _____ per hour. Please send me a pledge form so that I can also seek pledges from friends and family.
- I will sponsor the Golden Gate Audubon volunteer team or _____ at \$ _____ per hour or give a total donation of \$ _____. (Suggested minimum pledge rate: \$15 per hour.)
- I can't participate in the Restore-A-Thon but want to help! Enclosed is my donation of \$ _____.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

Sponsors contributing \$30 or more receive a California Quail tote bag.
Please RSVP by November 2 to help us prepare for the event.

Make checks payable to **Golden Gate Audubon Society** and mail to:

Golden Gate Audubon Society
2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G
Berkeley, CA 94702

Or go to www.goldengateaudubon.org to sign up and make a donation.

Lawsuit Filed to Protect MLK Wetlands

Golden Gate Audubon has been working to protect Martin Luther King, Jr., Regional Shoreline from a damaging proposed development (see the September *Gull*). Despite our efforts to work with the developer to mitigate the project, we are concerned that the proposed project will have too great an impact on wildlife and the East Oakland community. As this issue is going to press, we are preparing to file a lawsuit to force the Port of Oakland to complete an Environmental Impact Review for the trucking terminal.

The initial study failed to evaluate adequately light and noise impacts on endangered species and migratory birds at the MLK shoreline. Most egregiously, the study failed to assess impacts on the restored wetlands and seasonal ponds immediately adjacent to the proposed trucking terminal. Furthermore, the project is likely contrary to an agreement signed by the Port of Oakland after it lost a lawsuit to Golden Gate Audubon over a decade ago regarding illegal filling of wetlands at the site.

About 70 species of birds and wildlife depend on MLK shoreline park. Over 300,000 visitors use this precious open

space annually. The project is central to our Eco-Oakland Program, which brings thousands of East Oakland schoolchildren and families to the park to explore and enjoy local wetlands and wildlife. Golden Gate Audubon is committed to protecting this important community and environmental resource.

by Eli Saddler, Conservation Director

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Contact Roadway Express president, terry.gilbert@roadway.com, and ask the company to stay in its current facility or find another suitable location.
- Contact Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums, officeofthemayor@oaklandnet.com, and urge him to help save MLK shoreline park for the East Oakland community and for the wildlife that depends on it.
- If you are an Oakland resident, contact your city council representative and urge him or her to support protection of MLK shoreline park. You can reach the council at 510.238.3266.
- Tell the Port of Oakland that you are not satisfied with its decision to permit a trucking terminal immediately adjacent to a community park and endangered species habitat. Go to board@portoakland.com.

Fall Classes in San Francisco

The second sessions of Joe Morlan's birding classes, endorsed by Golden Gate Audubon, start soon. All classes meet from 7 to 9:15 p.m. in room 219, Marina Middle School, 3500 Fillmore at Bay Street.

Participants who sign up a week early receive a \$10 discount. Register at www.evolveww.com/ce.ccsf/. For details, go to <http://fog.ccsf.edu/~jmoran/fall07.htm>.

Field Ornithology I

Intro combining basic field skills with bird ecology, biology, evolution, and behavior. Part B (EA105): Tuesdays, October 30 – December 11, \$140

Field Ornithology II

Identification of water birds including shorebirds and gulls. Part B (EA115): Wednesdays, October 24 – December 12, \$140

Field Ornithology III

Study of land birds including pipits, waxwings, and warblers. Part B (EA125): Thursdays, November 1 – December 13, \$125

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